The Doctor's Dilemma

By Hesba Stretton

CHAPTER XXI.

I went out late in the evening to question each of the omnibus drivers, but in vain. Whether they were too busy to give me proper attention, or too anxious to join the stir and mirth of the townspeople, they all declared they knew nothing of any Englishwoman. As I returned dejectedly to my inn, I heard a lamentable voice, evidently English, bemoaning in doubtful French. The omnibus from Falaise had just come in, and under the lamp in the entrance of the archway stood a lady before my hostess, who was volubly asserting that there was no room left in her house. I hastened to the assistance of my countrywoman, and the light of the lamp falling upon her face revealed to me who she was.

"Mrs. Foster!" I exclaimed, almost shouting her name in my astonishment. She looked ready to faint with fatigue and dismay, and she laid her hand heavily on my arm, as if to save herself from sinking to the ground.

"Have you found her?" she asked, involuntarily.

"Not a trace of her," I answered.

Mrs. Foster broke into an hysterical laugh, which was very quickly followed by sobs. I had no great difficulty in persuading the landlady to find some accommodation for her, and then I retired to my own room to turn over the extraordinary meeting which had been the last incident of the day.

It required very little keenness to come to the conclusion that the Fosters had obtained their information concerning Miss Ellen Martineau where we had got ours, from Mrs. Wilkinson; also that Mrs. Foster had lost no time in following up the clue, for she was only twenty-four hours behind me. She had looked thoroughly astonished and dismayed when she saw me there; so she had had no idea that I was on the same track. But nothing could be more convincing than this journey of hers that neither she nor Foster really believed in Olivia's death. That was as clear as day. But what explanation could I give to myself of those letters, of Olivia's above all? Was it possible that she had caused them to be written, and sent to her husband? I could not even admit such a question without a sharp sense of disappointment in her.

I saw Mrs. Foster early in the morning, somewhat as a truce-bearer may meet another on neutral ground. She was grateful to me for my interposition in her behalf the night before; and as I knew Ellen Martineau to be safely out of the way, I was inclined to be tolerant towards her. I assured her, upon my honor, that I had failed in discovering any trace of Olivia in Noireau, and I told her all I had learned about the bankruptcy of Monsieur Perrier, and the scattering of the school.

"But why should you undertake such a chase?" I asked; "if you and Foster are satisfied that Olivia is dead, why should you be running after Ellen Martineau? You show me the papers which seem to prove her death, and now I find you in this remote part of Normandy, evidently in pursuit of her. What does this mean?"

"You are doing the same thing yourself," she answered.

"Yes," I replied, "because I am not satisfied. But you have proved your conviction by becoming Richard Foster's second wife."

"That is the very point," she said, shedding a few tears; "as soon as ever Mrs. Wilkinson described Ellen Martineau to me, when she was talking about her visitor who had come to inquire after her, I grew quite frightened lest he should ever be charged with marrying me whilst she was alive. So I persuaded him to let me come here and make sure of it, though the journey costs a great deal, and we have very little money to spare. We did not know what tricks Olivia might do, and it made me very miserable to think she might be still alive, and I in her place."

I could not but acknowledge to myself that there was some reason in Mrs. Foster's statement of the case.

"There is not the slightest chance of your finding her," I remarked.

"Isn't there?" she asked, with an evil gleam in her eyes, which I just caught before she hid her face again in her handkerchief.

"At any rate," I said, "you would have no power over her if you found her. You could not take her back with you by force. I do not know how the French laws would regard Foster's authority, but you can have none whatever, and he is quite unfit to take this long journey to claim her. Really I do not see what you can do; and I should think your wisest plan would be to go back and take care of him, leaving her alone. I am here to protect her, and I shall stay until I see you fairly out of the place."

I kept no very strict watch over her during the day, for I felt sure she would find no trace of Olivia in Noireau. At night I saw her again. She was worn out and despondent, and declared herself quite ready to return to Falaise by the omnibus at five o'clock in the morning. I saw her off, and gave the driver a fee to bring me word for what town she took her ticket at the railway station. When he returned in the evening he told me he had himself bought her one for Honfleur, and started her fairly on her way home.

As for myself I had spent the day in making inquiries at the offices of the local custom houses which stand at every entrance into a town or village in France, for the gathering of trifling, vexatious taxes upon articles of food and merchandise. At one of these I had learned that, three or four weeks ago a young Englishwoman with a little girl had passed by on foot, each carrying a small bundle, which had not been examined. It was on the road to Granville, which was between thirty and forty miles away. From Granville was the nearest route to the Channel Islands. Was it not possible that Olivia had resolved to seek refuge there again? Perhaps to seek me! My heart, bowed down by the sad picture of her and the little child leaving the town on foot, beat high again at the thought of Olivia in Guernsey.

At Granville I learned that a young lady and a child had made the voyage to Jersey a short time before, and I went on with stronger hope. But in Jersey I could obtain no further information about her; nor in Guernsey, whither I felt sure Olivia would certainly have proceeded. I took one day more to cross over to Sark, and consult Tardif; but he knew no more than I did. He absolutely refused to believe that Olivia was dead.

"In August," he said, "I shall hear from her. Take courage and comfort. She promised it, and she will keep her promise. If she had known herself to be dying she would certainly have sent me word."

"It is a long time to wait," I said, with an utter sinking of spirit.

"It is a long time to wait!" he echoed, lifting up his hands, and letting them fall again with a gesture of weariness; "but we must wait and hope."

To wait in impatience, and to hope at times, and despair at times, I returned to London.

CHAPTER XXII.

One of my first proceedings, after my return, was to ascertain how the English law stood with regard to Olivia's position. Fortunately for me, one of Dr. Senior's oldest friends was a lawyer of great repute, and he discussed the question with me after a dinner at his house at Fulham.

"There seems to be no proof of any kind against the husband," he said, after I had told him all.

"Why!" I exclaimed, "here you have a girl, brought up in luxury and wealth, willing to brave any poverty rather than continue to live with him."

"A girl's whim," he said.

"Then Foster could compel her to return to him?" I asked.

"As far as I see into the case, he certainly could," was the answer, which drove me frantic.

"But there is this second marriage," I objected.

"There lies the kernel of the case," he said. "You tell me there are papers, which you believe to be forgeries, purporting to be the medical certificate with corroborative proof of her death. Now, if the wife be guilty of framing these, the husband will bring them against her as the grounds on which he felt free to contract his second marriage. She has done a very foolish and a very wicked thing there."

"You think she did it?" I asked.

He smiled significantly, but without saying anything.

"But what can be done now?" I asked.

"All you can do," he answered, "is to establish your influence over this fellow and go cautiously to work with him. As long as the lady is in France, if she be alive, and he is too ill to go after her, she is safe. You may convince him by degrees that it is to his interest to come to some terms with her. A formal deed of separation might be agreed upon, and drawn up; but even that will not perfectly secure her in the future."

I was compelled to remain satisfied with this opinion. Yet how could I be satisfied, whilst Olivia, if she was still living, was wandering about homeless, and, as I feared, destitute, in a foreign country?

I made my first call upon Foster the next evening. Mrs. Foster had been to Brook street every day since her return, to inquire for me, and to leave an urgent message that I should go to Bellringer street as soon as I was again in town. The lodging house looked almost as wretched as the forsaken dwelling down at Noireau, where Olivia had perhaps been living; and the stifling, musty air inside it almost made me gasp for breath.

"So you are come back!" was Foster's greeting, as I entered the dingy room.

"Yes," I replied.

"I need not ask what success you've had," he said, sneering. "'Why so pale and wan, fond lover?' Your trip has not agreed with you, that is plain enough. It did not agree with Carry, either, for she came back swearing she would never go on such a wild-goose chase again. You know I was quite opposed to her going?"

"No," I said incredulously. The diamond ring had disappeared from his finger, and it was easy to guess how the funds had been raised for the journey.

"Altogether opposed," he repeated. "I believe Olivia is dead. I am quite sure she has never been under this roof with me, as Miss Ellen Martineau has been. I should have known it as surely as ever a tiger scented its prey. Do you suppose I have no sense keen enough to tell me she was in the very house where I was?"

"Nonsense!" I answered. His eyes glistened cruelly, and made me almost ready to spring upon him. I could have seized him by the throat and shaken him to death, in my sudden passion of loathing against him; but I sat quiet, and ejaculated "Nonsense!" Such power has the spirit of the nineteenth century among civilized classes.

"Olivia is dead," he said, in a solemn tone. "I am convinced of that from another reason; through all the misery of our marriage, I never knew her guilty of an untruth, not the smallest. She was as true as the gospel. Do you think you or Carry could make me believe that she would trifle with such an awful subject as her own death? No. I would take my oath that Olivia would never have had that letter sent, or written to me those few lines of farewell, but to let me know that she was dead."

There was no doubt whatever that he was suffering from the same disease as that which had been the death of my mother—a disease almost invariably fatal, sooner or later. A few cases of cure, under most favorable circumstances, had been reported during the last half century; but the chances were dead against Foster's recovery. In all probability, a long and painful illness, terminating in inevitable death, lay before him. In the opinion of my two senior physicians, all that I could do would be to alleviate the worst pangs of it.

His case haunted me day and night. In that deep undercurrent of consciousness which lurks beneath our surface sensations and impressions, there was always present the image of Foster, with his pale, cynical face and pitiless eyes. With this was the perpetual remembrance that a subtle malady, beyond the reach of our skill, was slowly eating away his life. The man I abhorred; but the sufferer, mysteriously linked with the memories which clung about my mother, aroused my most urgent, instinctive compassion. Only once before had I watched the conflict between disease and its remedy with so intense an interest.

It was a day or two after a consultation that I came accidentally upon the little note book which I had kept in Guernsey—a private note book, accessible only to myself. It was night; Jack, as usual, was gone out, and I was alone. I turned over the leaves merely for listless want of occupation. All at once I came upon an entry, made in connection with my mother's illness, which recalled to me the discovery I believed I had made of a remedy for her disease, had it only been applied in its earlier stages. It had slipped out of my mind, but now my memory leaped upon it with irresistible force.

I must tell the whole truth, however terrible and humiliating it may be. Whether I had been true or false to myself up to that moment I cannot say. I had taken upon myself the care and, if possible, the cure of this man, who was my enemy, if I had an enemy in the world. His life and mine could not run parallel without great grief and hurt to me, and to one dearer than myself. Now, that a better chance was thrust upon me in his favor, I shrank from seizing it with unutterable reluctance. I turned heart-sick at the thought of it.

Yes, I wished him to die. Conscience flashed the answer across the inner depths of my soul, as a glare of lightning over the sharp crags and cruel waves of our island in a midnight storm. I saw with terrible distinctness that there had been lurking within a sure sense of satisfaction in the certainty that he must die. I took up my note book, and went away to my room, lest Jack should come in suddenly and read my secret on my face. I thrust the book into a drawer in my desk, and locked it away, out of my sight.

It seemed cruel that this power should come to me from my mother's death. If she were living still, or if she had died from any other cause, the discovery of this remedy would never have been made by me. And I was to take it as a sort of miraculous gift, purchased by her pangs, and bestow it upon the only man I hated. For I hated him; I said so to myself.

But it could not rest at that. I fought a battle with myself all through the quiet night, motionless and in silence, lest Jack should become aware that I was not sleeping. How should I ever face him, or grasp his hearty hand again, with such a secret weight upon my soul? Yet how could I resolve to save Foster at the cost of dooming Olivia to a lifelong bondage should he discover where she was, or to lifelong poverty should she remain concealed? If I were only sure that she was alive! It was for her sake merely that I hesitated.

The morning dawned before I could decide. The decision, when made, brought no feeling of relief or triumph to me. As soon as it was probable that Dr. Senior could see me, I was at his house at Fulham; and in rapid, almost incoherent words laid what I believed to be my important discovery before him. He sat thinking for some time, running over in his own mind such cases as had come under his own observation. After a while a gleam of pleasure passed over his face, and his eyes brightened as he looked at me.

"I congratulate you, Martin," he said, "though I wish Jack had hit upon this. I believe it will prove a real benefit to our science. Let me turn it over a little longer, and consult some of my colleagues about it. But I think you are right. You are about to try it on poor Foster?"

"Yes," I answered, with a chilly sensation in my veins.

"It can do him no harm," he said, "and in my opinion it will prolong his life to old age, if he is careful of himself. I will write a paper on the subject for the Lancet, if you will allow me."

"With all my heart," I said sadly.

The old physician regarded me for a minute with his keen eyes, which had looked through the window of disease into many a human soul. I shrank from the scrutiny, but I need not have done so. He grasped my hand firmly and closely.

"God bless you, Martin!" he said, "God bless you!"

I went straight from Fulham to Bellringer street. A healthy impulse to fulfill all my duty, however difficult, was in its first fervid moment of action. Nevertheless there was a subtle hope within me founded upon one chance that was left—it was just possible that Foster might refuse to be made the subject of an experiment; for an experiment it was.

I sat down beside him, and told him what I believed to be his chance of life; not concealing from him that I proposed to try, if he gave his consent, a mode of treatment which had never been practiced before. His eye, keen and sharp as that of a lynx, seemed to read my thoughts as Dr. Senior's had done.

"Martin Dobree," he said, in a voice so different from his ordinary caustic tone that it almost startled me, "I can trust you. I put myself with implicit confidence into your hands."

The last chance—dare I say the last hope?—was gone. I stood pledged on my honor as a physician, to employ this discovery, which had been laid open to me by my mother's fatal illness, for the benefit of the man whose life was most harmful to Olivia and myself. I felt suffocated, stifled. I opened the window for a minute or two, and leaned through it to catch the fresh breath of the outer air.

"I must tell you," I said, when I drew my head in again, "that you must not expect to regain your health and strength so completely as to be able to return to your old dissipations. But if you are careful of yourself you may live to sixty or seventy."

"Life at any price!" he answered.

"There would be more chance for you now," I said, "if you could have better air than this."

"How can I?" he asked.

"Be frank with me," I answered, "and tell me what your means are. It would be worth your while to spend your last farthing upon this chance."

"Is it not enough to make a man mad," he said, "to know there are thousands lying in the bank in his wife's name, and he cannot touch a penny of it? It is life itself to me; yet I may die like a dog in this hole for the want of it. My death will lie at Olivia's door, curse her!"

He fell back upon his pillows, with a groan as heavy and deep as ever came from the heart of a wretch perishing from sheer want. I could not choose but feel some pity for him; but this was an opportunity I must not miss.

"It is of no use to curse her," I said; "come, Foster, let us talk over this matter quietly and reasonably. If Olivia be alive, as I cannot help hoping she is, your wisest course would be to come to some mutual agreement, which would release you both from your present difficulties; for you must recollect she is as penniless as yourself. Let me speak to you as if I were her brother. Of this one thing you may be quite certain, she will never consent to return to you; and in that I will aid her to the utmost of my power. But there is no reason why you should not have a good share of the property, which she would gladly relinquish on condition that you left her alone."

(To be continued.)

Vegetables Will Become Valuable.

Two Melbourneites claim to have discovered a new motive power, "lighter than air, more powerful than dynamite, very simple and nominal in cost." Byronite (named after one of the inventors) is a fine powder alleged to be made from cheap vegetables, and generates, it is said, when specially treated, a gas which supplies the actual motive power.—Sydney Bulletin.

Molly—My little sister's got measles.

Jimmie—Oh, so has mine.

Molly—Well, I'll bet you my little sister's got more measles than yours has.—London Tit-Bits.

You can always tell a nice girl by the manner in which she uses the telephone.

CANDID MEN.

They Speak Their Minds in an Embarrassing Way Occasionally.

"Men are dreadfully brusque sometimes," sighed Belinda. "The other night my brother and I went to the house of a friend to a reception. It was a hot night and the house was crowded and there wasn't anything to do but to stand around and talk to the people one could reach, while the people one really wanted to talk with could only be seen at a distance and over a sea of intervening heads. In addition the croquettes were cold and the ice cream warm, so when we finally got away both my brother and I said, 'Thank heaven' quite reverently, and went to a hotel and had supper.

"The next day all of my friends whom I met asked 'Didn't you have a lovely time at the Blanks last night?' and I invariably replied 'Delightful.' Then we went on our separate ways. When they asked my brother the same question he answered with a frankness that appalled and embarrassed me, 'No, I did not. I had the stupidest time of my life; and, say, they'd better get another chef the next time they entertain, for the supper was awful.'

"Here," said Belinda, "I trace a strong point of difference between men and women. The average girl has too much pride to let it be known that she has gone to an entertainment and has still failed to be entertained. I saw one pretty guileless looking creature sit alone one night at a dance for nine straight dances, then I had compassion on her and sent my escort and a couple of other men to ask her for the remaining two-steps and waltzes. She danced four times in all, yet the next time she saw me she said she'd had a real delirious times at that ball, a delightful, never-to-be-forgotten time, and, she added modestly, that she had been quite a belle. A man under the same circumstances, though they had been of his own making, asked if he had enjoyed himself, would have replied emphatically and vulgarly, 'No, I didn't. I had a fierce time.'

"Why, I know of one lord of creation who told some friends that his honeymoon had been very tiresome, and of another who in bidding his host good-by after a yachting trip remarked that he had a pleasant time, all things considered, but that all water journeys were more or less of bores. Imagine a woman doing anything so tactless. Why, if it had been a girl instead of a man in the latter case, though she had been seasick for the entire two weeks, though the salt water and air had ruined her prettiest gowns, taken the curl out of her hair and the rose from her complexion, she would have staggered off the yacht declaring faintly that she'd had the time of her life, and that she'd like to go again to-morrow. That's the feminine idea of true politeness."

ROSTAND'S SISTER LIVES IN WASHINGTON.

Mme. de Margerie, the brilliant and beautiful sister of Edmond Rostand, the author of "Cyrano de Bergerac" and "L'Aiglon," has taken up her residence in Washington. Her husband, M. de Margerie, one of the most promising young diplomats in the service of France, is first secretary of the French Embassy in Washington.

MME. DE MARGERIE

Mme. de Margerie, whose mother was a Spaniard, has inherited from her her dark beauty of color and features, with an expression of indefinable charm. She possesses also the reputation of being one of the brightest and wittiest young women of the diplomatic corps.

Harold's Papa Was "Shy."

The proud young father, after the manner of his kind, was telling stories about the doings of his first-born. Many trivial incidents had been related, and the little circle of listeners had exhausted all their ingenuity in pretending to be interested. "Tell them the story about the penny," suggested the young hopeful's mother. The proud father pretended not to hear, when grew red, and finally shook a violent negative with his head. "Then I will," exclaimed the baby's mother. "It's too cute for anything. You know Harold will be 2 years old next month, and we are now taking him to church with us. His father always gives him a penny to put in the collection plate. Well, last Sunday the plate was being passed, and some one dropped a coin on the floor. It made quite a loud noise, and Harold turned to me and asked, in a voice loud enough to be heard all over the church: 'Mamma, whose penny are that?' Wasn't it the cutest thing? Of course he thought that nobody ever gave more than a penny because that's all his papa ever gives him." Then the proud young father blushed more deeply than ever.—Philadelphia Record.

A Model Woman.

"Did you not say, Ellen, that Mr. B. is poor?"

"Yes, he has only his profession."

"Will your uncle favor his suit?"

"No; and I can expect nothing from him."

"Then, Ellen, you will have to resign fashionable society."

"No matter—I shall see more of Fred."

"You must give up expensive dress."

"Oh, Fred admires simplicity."

"You cannot keep a carriage."

"But we can have our delightful walks."

"You must take a small house and furnish it plainly."

"Yes; for elegant furniture would be out of place in a cottage."

"You will have to cover your floors with thin, plain carpets."

"Then I shall hear his steps the sooner."

Good Word for Him.

Banks—Dumleigh is not such a dunce as they make him out. He gets off a good thing once in a while.

Hill—But it isn't original.

Banks—Still it's bright in him to remember it.—Boston Transcript.

ENGLAND'S FIRST SHIP.

Great Harry Was the Country's Premier Fighting Machine.

Of the first ship, properly speaking, of the British navy, known as the Great Harry, the following particulars are given in an old number of the Merchants' Magazine, dated Oct. 25, 1823:

The Great Harry was built by King Henry VII. at a cost of £14,000 and was burned at Woolwich through accident in 1553.

Though King Henry, as well as other princes, hired many ships, exclusive of those which the different seaports were obliged to furnish, he seems thus to have been the first king who thought of avoiding this inconvenience by raising such a force as might be at all times sufficient for the service of the state. Historians tell us that he caused his navy, which had been neglected in the preceding reign, to be put in a condition to protect the British coasts against all foreign invasions, and that in the midst of profound peace he always kept up a fleet ready to act.

In August, 1512, the Regent, a ship of 1,000 tons, which was at that time the largest vessel in the British navy, was burned, and to replace it the Great Harry, or, as it was also known, the Henry Grace de Dieu, was built in 1515.

The vessel, of about 1,000 tons burden, was manned by 349 soldiers, 301 marines and 50 gunners. She had four masts and portholes on both decks and in other parts.

Before the time of her construction the cannon were placed above deck and on the prow and poop. One Decharges, a French builder at Brest, is said to have invented portholes.

In a list of the British navy as it stood on Jan. 5, 1548, the Great Harry is said to have carried 19 brass and 103 iron pieces of ordnance.

The name of the ship is said to have been changed in the reign of Edward VI. to Edward, which, on Aug. 16, 1552, was reported to be still "in good case to serve," and was ordered "to be grounded and calked once a year to keep it tight."

HORATIO J. SPRAGUE.

Father of America's Consular Service, Who Died at Gibraltar.

Horatio J. Sprague, United States consul at Gibralter, who died there some time ago, aged 77 years, was the oldest of the American representatives abroad, and had been consul at that place for 53 years. He was very popular among the residents there, who are desirous that Richard Sprague, his son, shall be appointed in his stead. Mr. Sprague was the dean of the American consular service and his record at Gibralter was altogether unique and eminently gratifying to the department at Washington.

H. J. SPRAGUE.

The aged consul was born at Gibralter, Aug. 12, 1823. His father was a Bostonian, who settled in the great fortress town soon after the war of 1812 and became a permanent resident. In 1845 young Sprague was made consul and remained in that office fifty-three years. He served under fourteen presidents and personally entertained three of them who visited Gibralter after leaving the White House. These were Fillmore, Pierce and Grant. The consul was a warm friend of Admiral Dewey, and when the hero of Manila stopped at the Rock on his way home Mr. Sprague took charge of him for a time and hospitably entertained the famous sailor. During the war of the rebellion Mr. Sprague was in a most delicate position, but he carried it off with great credit to himself and to the cause of the North. In the late Spanish war he was placed in even a more exacting situation, but he met it capably and well. Although he had visited this country but once, he was a patriotic and enthusiastic American, as is likewise his son, Richard Sprague, whom the residents of Gibralter would like to see succeed as consul.

Dandruff and Baldness.

A contributor to The Edinburgh Medical Journal declares that if dandruff be cured the loss of hair will be checked, unless the deadening of the scalp has gone too far. He has had positive results in checking the fall of hair and increasing its amount by using precipitated sulphur, 10 per cent, in a good cold cream, with or without either salicylic acid, 3 to 5 per cent, or extract of jaborandi, 1 drachm to the ounce. The ointment proposed by Bronson, composed of ammoniated mercury, 20 grains; calomel, 40 grains, in 1 ounce of vaseline, has also done good service in some cases. Sometimes resorcin in solution and in increasing strength has proved helpful. On the other hand, naphthol and cantharides have been complete failures; in many cases none of these had aided. The dandruff, being parasitic in origin, is apt to relapse, hence the remedies are to be resumed should it reappear. For stimulating the growth of the hair the best remedy is massage, but this must not be resorted to until the dandruff has disappeared. The services of a skilled professional give the best results, but good may be done by the patient himself pinching up the scalp between the ends of the extended fingers of both hands for five minutes twice a day.

His Ingenious Argument.

"This country ought to be ashamed of a man who will use money illegitimately in politics," said the earnest citizen.

"It never struck me that way," answered Senator Sorghum.

"I don't see how any one can hold a contrary opinion."

"Well, I suppose it all depends on how you get accustomed to looking at the matter. When a man is willing to pay hundreds of thousands of good dollars to get an office it seems to me the country ought to feel kind of proud."—Washington Star.

The Dear Girls.

Miss Tellit—Susie Anteek says that young Bimer, the poet, has written some verses entitled "Lines to Susie's Eyes."

Miss Sezzit—Well, I don't call it very kind of him to draw attention to her crow's feet.—Baltimore American.